

Transit Task Force
Eighteenth Session
January 11, 2012
Meeting Summary

The Eighteenth Session of the Transit Task Force was called to order by the chair at 7:00 p.m. on Wednesday, January 11, 2012.

I. General Comments from the Chair

The Chair indicated that the TTF would be quickening its pace and begin working towards finalizing recommendations and adoption of a report. Furthermore, he indicated that the consultant “The Traffic Group” had finished its concept plans and cost estimate breakdowns for each corridor and has provided a report containing all of this information. The approach that was taken by the group for the report was to minimize taking Right of Way (ROW) in the short term.

- Discussion:
 - Casey Anderson - ‘Are there assumptions being made about lane reassignments or is it just what we could build today with the space we have?’
 - Mark Winston - ‘If the concept plan is adopted, much of the route system will be built using single reversible lanes. That means that a significant portion of the system will operate in the median. A substantial part of system will also be using BAT (business access transit) lanes. At peak periods, lanes may be dedicated to RTV vehicles while the opposite direction may not be only for RTV for use. If the Corridor Cities Transit Way becomes part of the RTV system, it will be built using dual guide ways.’

How the report will be reviewed: Copies of the report will be given to the MNCPPC staff, MCDOT staff, TTF Group D members, and MDOT staff. Agencies may send comments directly to consultants and will deliver copies of their comments to Group D. Group D will meet to consider all comments and will make final recommendations to the Task Force not later than the February 8th meeting. Comments and changes will be presented to TTF in a future meeting.

Final action on all matters being considered by the Task Force will hopefully be taken by the end of February, with a report to be approved by the Task Force and delivered to the County Executive by mid-March.

II. Status Report from Group B – Ancillary Facilities Working Group

- Status Report given by Tom Street:
 - On the 19th of January at 3:00 p.m. the County Council T & E Committee will be taking up a recommendation from the County Executive to revise the recommended Locally Preferred Alternative (LPA) for the CCT from LRT to RTV. The full Council will probably take up the issue at its scheduled meeting on 24th of January.
 - The Ancillary Facilities Report is not yet ready. Maintenance, storage, and parking needs are still being reviewed. The target date for a final report from Group B is the Task Force meeting on January 25th.
 - Given the likelihood of change for the CCT LPA, we need to look at the maintenance

- facilities that were planned for CCT and use them for the RTV system.
- Another maintenance/storage site studied by Work Group B for mid/east county will be covered at the next meeting.
- MCDOT has developed a preliminary estimate of parking requirements to support the RTV system. A more detailed study will be needed to calculate specific requirements, but MCDOT's preliminary estimate is that an additional 900 spaces of parking at an average cost of \$25,000 per space (or \$22.5 million) will be needed in the next 10 years.

III. Status Report from Group E – Finance Working Group

- Status Report given by Mark Winston:
 - Work is being done on finalizing real property tax base information for creating special taxing districts.
 - A methodology is being finalized to estimate operating costs of the entire system. The Chair is working with consultants and staff in order to consolidate all information relating to capital costs so that a single, integrated presentation of capital costs can be prepared for review by the Task Force. In addition, Group E will soon review a draft plan for structuring financing of the system which will be presented to the Task Force along with capital and operating cost information. It is anticipated that the report of group E will be presented to the Task Force on either February 8th or 22nd.
 - The Chair has requested that assessable base information be developed for the CCT alignment so that it may be incorporated into the taxable base for the balance of the RTV system. The chair has also asked the consultant to develop such information for properties along the Purple Line so that the County Executive and Council will have such information available in the event that they wish to utilize a special taxing district technique as the vehicle for generating the local financial contribution for the Purple Line as light rail.

IV. Status Report on Environmental Matters

- Status Report given by David Hauck

Messrs. Hauck, Street and Winston met with Mr. Tom Ligan and Ms. Rosewin Sweeney of the Venable law firm to discuss potential environmental regulatory and compliance issues raised by development of the RTV system.

Main Question: How could the RTV system create environmental regulatory and compliance issues, and how should the developer of the system approach addressing those concerns?

- 1) Paving over grass medians might cause rain overflow (Median is considered existing ROW)
- 2) New construction of dedicated guide ways across wetlands or waterways
- 3) Community concerns over RTV use of fossil fuels
- 4) If we aren't applying for federal construction money do we need to comply with NEPA requirements?
 - Possible outcomes of NEPA:
 1. Categorical Exclusion (unlikely)

2. Environmental Assessment – likely.
 3. Environmental Impact Study – may be needed for some portions of the system – maybe put the construction of the routes that require this in the last phase, but do the EIS work in Phase I.
- Discussion:
 - Mark – ‘A proposed approach when paving medians is to pave strips and leave grassy areas in between. The consultant has developed a concept plan that does not require the increase of size/ rebuilding of bridges and that minimizes other impacts. When agency staffs review the concept plan during the next couple of weeks they will hopefully review them bearing the environmental issues in mind and will point out issues they see. Our inclination was that we will pursue an environmental assessment as a first step. If this is done properly it can be done without delay.’
 - David – ‘Storm water management issues play a big role. There is no EIS precedent for linear developments. This may be an opportunity to brand the system as environmentally friendly by adding water management possibilities into the system and actually improving this aspect for residents.’
 - Tina – ‘If EIS was going to be required for certain routes, meaning that they will be pushed back into the last phase, will we know by the time we put out our report?’
 - Al Roshdieh - ‘Yes.’
 - Dan Wilhelm – ‘I’m assuming the report we heard applies to the initial network. In the future would others need to address future environmental impact?’
 - David – ‘That is my assumption. The lawyers raised the point that if we phase it so that only the third phase needs an EIS those routes need to be considered a network in itself.’
 - Mark – ‘Our current phasing addresses that each phase has its own network characteristics. The only sections of the network that would require a bridge would be the CCT over I-270, and that segment already has a completed environmental study.’
 - Jonathan Genn – ‘As a policy matter, wouldn’t we want to do more environmental compliance now as it may be easier to get approved today than 10 years from now?’
 - Diane Ratcliffe – ‘Environmental review records of decisions are effective for only 3 years; otherwise the project needs to be revisited. The FTA would advise the TTF on the best way to stage this.’
 - Dale Tibbitts – ‘I would hope that our report embraces the positive environmental aspects of our system. It wouldn’t have much of an environmental impact anyway because we’re staying within existing roads, not building bridges, etc.’
 - Jon – ‘Does the smart growth benefit factor into environmental evaluation? After all, we are creating a system which will help move people.’
 - Gary Erenrich – ‘I believe so yes. There is a need for the project so that will be taken under consideration.’
 - Mark – ‘I believe there are fewer challenges in this situation (RTV system) than in other projects where NEPA is involved. Our approach will be to minimize immediate impacts.’

V. **Discussion/Action on Report from Group D – Routes and Development Sequencing Working Group**

- Presented by Tina Slater

Group D will present changes to the preliminary route and sequencing memorandum presented and approved by the Task Force on October 5th, for example:

- 1) Mileage of routes
 - 2) Length of routes according to the TTG Conceptual Plan.
 - 3) EIS might influence phasing
 - 4) The system will most likely be used to connect with stations of other services (bus, MARC train, etc.) but won't run RTVs along I270 and 495.
- Discussion:
 - Mark – ‘The Task Force will be asked to give final consideration of Group D’s recommendations when they are presented.’
 - Casey – ‘Have you considered if RTV vehicles can lend dedicated lanes to express busses running along the same corridor?’
 - Mark – ‘At the work session held with the consultant, we gave the consultant the direction that dedicated lanes would be just for RTV vehicles. Nonetheless, the Task Force could reconsider this direction.’
 - Casey – ‘If you can show that there are a lot of current buses running down corridors which we can take out of travel lanes, it would make it easier to persuade opponents of our system.’
 - Mark- ‘This should only be reconsidered after we have the benefit of a full review of the concept plan – and when we discuss final route and sequencing recommendations. In those RTV corridors in which there are current bus operations, many of those vehicles will be replaced by our vehicles. Also, multi-purpose uses could compromise operations and raise issues regarding safety. We need an operational plan for the system before we know the answer some of these questions.’

The meeting was adjourned at 9:00 p.m. The next meeting will take place on Wednesday, January 25th.

- **Attendance at meeting:**
 - **Members in attendance:** Casey Anderson, Marylin Balcombe, Nat Bottigheimer, Jonathan Genn, David Hauck, David McDonough, Darrell Mobley, Wayne Phyllaier, Craig Simoneau, Tina Slater, Francine Waters, Dan Wilhelm, and Mark Winston.
 - **Members not in attendance:** Roger Berliner, Francoise Carrier, Marc Elrich, Art Holmes, Henry Montes, Rich Parsons, and Jonathan Sachs.
 - **Ex-officio members in attendance:** Tom Street and Ken Reichard
 - **Ex-officio members not in attendance:** Brian Feldman, Rob Garagiola, Joan Kleinman, Terra Sebag, and Steve Silverman.